## SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

LANSING, MICHIGAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 27, 2005

**CONTACT: SEN. LIZ BRATER** 

517-373-2406

## **Democrats Hear Water Concerns**

Senate Democrats Hold Second in Series of Environmental Town Halls

MONROE- Water quality concerns were the overriding topic of conversation tonight at the second in a series of environmentally focused town hall meetings held by Senate Democrats and Michigan's leading environmental groups. Entitled, "Five Lakes, Two Peninsulas, One Michigan," the forums are intended to give citizens the opportunity to voice their concerns and suggestions regarding the preservation of Michigan's natural resources.

"We must be proactive in protecting our resources for our citizens, farms, and businesses," said Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor). "These town hall meetings are intended to empower the public and bring attention to the threats to and limits of our natural resources." Sen. Brater has introduced the Water Legacy Act, legislation that will protect Michigan's legal authority over its fresh water.

This evening's water quality discussion focused primarily on guaranteeing Michigan's access to and control of its own fresh water. Monroe residents know firsthand the problems associated with the state's lack of management in this area. Mining operations in Monroe County pumped out massive amounts of the area's groundwater, which has affected the level of the water table. Citizens shared their concerns about the need to re-dig home wells and the activities that have lead to such drastic changes in groundwater availability.

Representatives from Clean Water Action, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and the Ecology Center, an Ann Arbor based environmental advocacy organization, were on hand to provide expert commentary.

"Careful management of our water supply is crucial to economic growth. Michigan Senate Democrats are working hard to preserve our state water supply," said Sen. Brater. "If we want to grow and prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must secure our water resources."

The repercussions of these water quality concerns are far-reaching. Michigan's water is a fundamental part of the state's most important industries: agriculture, tourism, utilities, and manufacturing. Consistent, fair rules for water withdrawals will guarantee a dependable water supply for these industries and allow individual business to establish long-term water use practices.

"We must make Michigan the kind of place in which people want to live and businesses want to grow," Sen. Gilda Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) said. "To grow our economy we must protect resources that help drive it. Clean, fresh, free drinking water is integral to that attraction."

The Great Lakes hold one fifth of the Earth's fresh water reserves. Currently, Michigan is the only state in the Great Lakes region without a water withdrawal statute. The legislation being proposed would mitigate water withdrawal.

"The main goal of these forums is to gather input. We want to hear the concerns of the citizens so we can ensure legislation that both meets the needs of the community and works once it is put into practice," shared Brater. The Democratic Caucus will host town hall events focused on water quality throughout the state. Future meetings are planned for Muskegon, Grayling, the Upper Peninsula, and St. Clair Shores. The first forum was held last month in Ann Arbor.

More information and the town hall schedule will be available in the near future at <a href="https://www.onemichigan.com">www.onemichigan.com</a>.